Despite Questions Over Turf, More Parents Are Helping Develop School Policies, Practices

Continued from Page 11

"Parents are not going to get power by 'storming the Bastille,' " he says. "The schools will always win, because they have the full-time professional manpower and expertise to fend off challenges."

Despite such opposition, many predict that the time for greater parent involvement in school policies and practices has arrived. There is evidence, for example, that educators, recognizing the importance of parent involvement to a child's academic success, are increasingly willing to consult with parents, although they remain reluctant to give them actual power.

And, as advocates point out, parents are the natural representatives of education's primary clients: children.

"Who has the strongest self-interest in ensuring that schools serve kids?" asks Donald Moore, executive director of Designs for Change, a research and advocacy group in Chicago. "Our answer to that question is parents."

"If teachers don't succeed," he adds, "they don't face the immediate consequences in the same way that parents do."

'Learning To Trust And Respect Each Other'

Many educators are not pleased by the prospects of an increased role for parents in school decisionmaking.

Surveys indicate that educators are far less receptive to the idea of parents as decisionmakers than they are to traditional forms of parent involvement that limit parents to support roles.

The 1987 Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher found, for instance, that only 26 percent of teachers favor "involving parents on a management team to determine school policies," and an even smaller proportion—18 percent—favors "placing parents on committees that decide the curriculum of the school."

Many educators believe that the drive by parents and other lay people to exert more control over schools belittles their years of training and experience and reflects the low esteem in which the education profession is held.

Joe See, a teacher in Independence, Ohio, expressed these sentiments recently in an essay prompted when his dentist mentioned that he had been elected chairman of a local citizens' advisory committee. Mr. See's remarks were printed in *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland.

"Through much of America's past," he wrote, "the schoolteacher has been viewed as simple, slightly silly, and marginally competent, properly indentured to the caprices of a community. Since educators as a group never came to be granted much implicit deference or professional latitude, beneath the surface of many people's mind lies the suspicion: 'I could teach as well as most of them.' "

"Probably I ought to have laid hands on my dentist friend, gripped his protruding nose in my left hand and his chin in my right, backed him into his own reclining chair and pried open his mouth," the teacher continued. "I'd have explained altruistically yet forcefully that I was conducting a much-needed investigation of local dental conditions and standards. In short order he'd learn how expertly I wield those sharp little probes and hooks and spear-points upon his own choppers."

Says Charles L. Glenn, a state official who wrote guidelines for parent involvement in Massachusetts: "Many education leaders secretly believe that parents don't know what's good for their kids."

"And to the teacher," he adds, "the parent appears as an unpredictable and uncontrollable element—a force which endangers and may even destroy the existing authority system over which she has some measure of control."

Seeking an Increased Voice

Parents, on the other hand, generally favor gaining an increased voice in school affairs, several surveys have found.

The Metropolitan Life survey found that a slight majority of parents—51 percent—believe that parents should participate on management teams that determine school policies, and that 47 percent would like to see parents involved in shaping a school's curriculum.

The 1989 Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools found that 59 percent of parents believe parents should have more say over the allocation of school funds, and 46 percent believe they ought to have more say over the selection and hiring of administrators.

"I believe parents do have a right and a responsibility for a formal role in the governance of schools," says Ann T. Lynch, president of the National PTA. "I don't believe it should be the predominant role, or that parents should have a majority vote, but I think they should be represented at the school-building level."

Advice from parents "oftentimes is not well received," she says, "but if it comes through a structured process, it is much

Who has the strongest self-interest in ensuring that schools serve kids? Our answer to that question is parents.

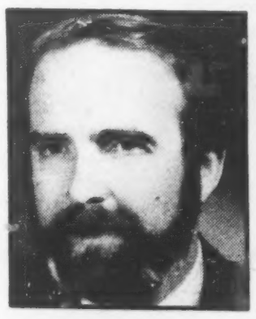
—Donald Moore

Parent involvement is a continuum, and advocacy is the highest level, the most difficult to achieve.

—Nancy Honig

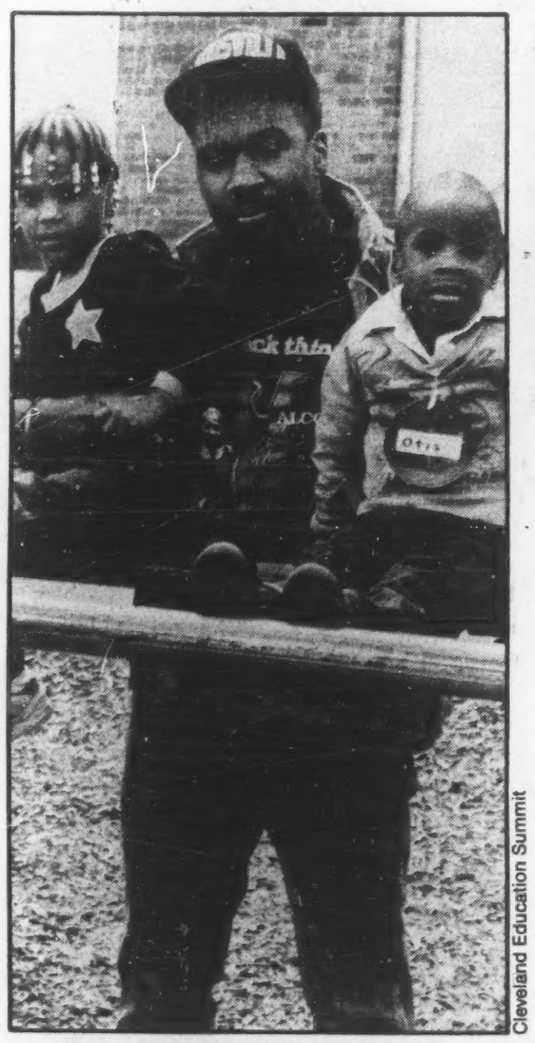
If advice from parents comes through a structured process, it is much more organized, much more valid.

—Ann T. Lynch

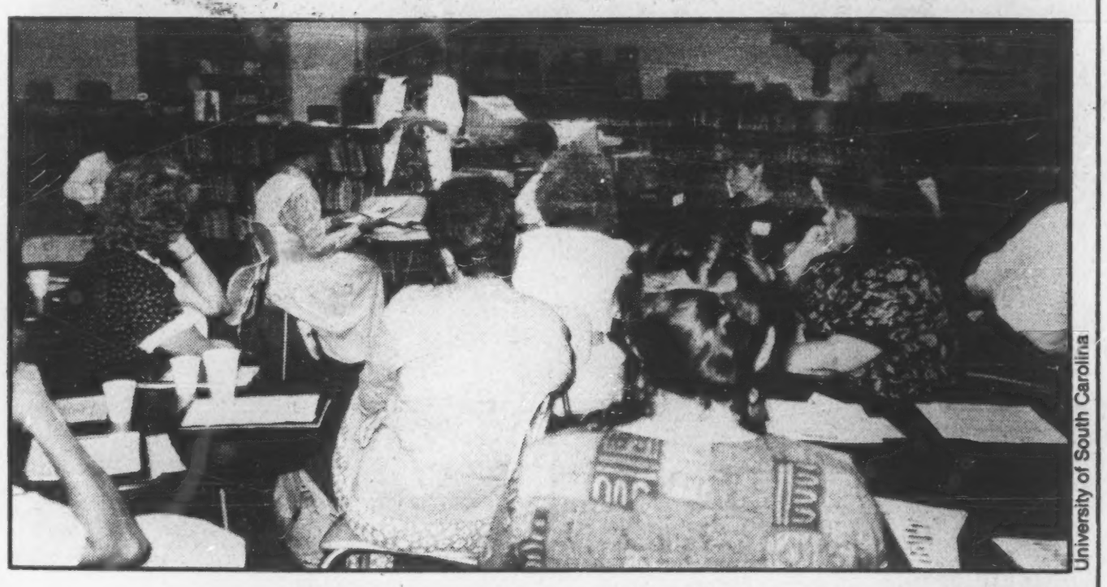


Parents are not going to get power by 'storming the Bastille.' The schools will always win.

—David S. Seeley



Cleveland Education Summit

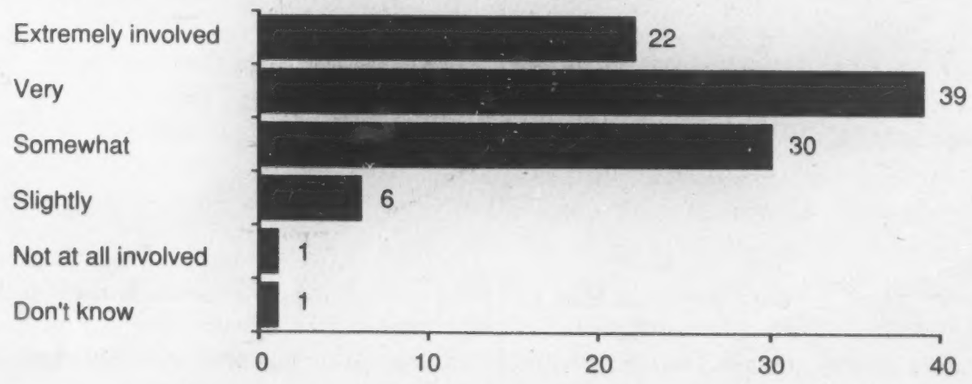


University of South Carolina

Evidence is mounting that educators, recognizing the importance of parent involvement to a child's academic success, are increasingly willing to consult with parents. In Cleveland, above, a parent volunteer helps out at his child's school. In South Carolina, parents on school councils receive training.

Parent Involvement In Curriculum Issues

To what extent do you believe parents should be involved in creating and modifying a school curriculum?



Base: Household heads with at least one child in grades K-12

Source: The PTA/Dodge National Survey, Newsweek Inc., 1990

more organized, much more valid, and parents can see the result."

"All parents care about their child's education," she adds, "but if nobody seems interested in what they think, their involvement level drops."

One of Many Roles

Although researchers, advocates, and others agree that becoming involved in school decisionmaking is one way for parents to interact with the schools, they disagree over how much emphasis should be placed on such an advocacy role.

The late Ira J. Gordon, whose research is often cited by parent advocates, depicted the various forms of parent involvement—including decisionmaker, volunteer, adult learner, and parent as teacher—as spokes in a wheel.

The wheel analogy implies equivalence between the roles, he said, not a hierarchy.

Different parents will prefer to participate in different ways, he said, but "what is important is that there be parents playing all of these roles in order for the wheel to turn efficiently."

Joyce L. Epstein, director of the Effective Middle Schools Program at Johns Hopkins University, agrees that "parent representation in school governance is an important part of a comprehensive program."

"In practice, as we work with schools," she says, "what we see is that, when parents have a voice, it helps teachers become more aware of parent perspectives and see how they can use other types of parent involvement."

Nancy Honig, president of the Quality Education Project, which has established parent-involvement programs in California and Mississippi, argues that "parent involvement is a continuum, and advocacy is the highest level, the most difficult to achieve."

"You have to get parents communicating and comfortable with the school," she says, "then they'll learn its structure and how they can help support it, and then you can get to advocacy."

"It's very naïve to say that if you want to have parental involvement, just get them involved in governance," Ms. Honig says. "If you don't follow a logical process, you're going to have chaos."

Building a Partnership

Ms. Henderson of the National Committee for Citizens in Education says one of the benefits of giving parents a substantive role in the schools is that it helps parents and teachers "learn to know one another and to trust and respect each other."

"It's much harder not to like and trust someone you know," she says.

The N.C.C.E. has been helping restructure seven schools in Community District 15 in Brooklyn, N.Y., through school-based committees.

"The more that parents felt they were partners in what was going on, the more successful that school was," the district's superintendent, William P. Casey, says.

"I don't know how anybody in education can discount the importance that parents can have in making schools work," he adds. "It's just common sense."

Experts also agree that parents are often in the best position to identify barriers to parent involvement and suggest ways that school officials can encourage more parent participation.

A few months ago, for example, a districtwide parent advisory committee in Indianapolis pointed out to officials that a proposed new report card for the system's junior high schools did not include a space for a parent's signature.

Committee members reminded the dis-

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Role of Parents in School Decisions Long Debated

By William Snider

Jim Estrin/The New York Times

Janitzia Corales-O'Neill, with her children, Carla and Eric, is one of several parents who, two years ago, won permission to establish an alternative public school in New York City.

The debate over the role of parents in school governance is closely related to the centuries-old debate over lay versus professional control of education.

The first schools in many American communities relied heavily on parents, who often hired teachers and shared responsibility for their room and board.

But, from the earliest years of the Republic, political leaders questioned the wisdom of giving parents control over their children's education, Charles Leslie Glenn Jr. writes in *The Myth of the Common School.*

He notes that Samuel Harrison Smith, editor of the *National Intelligencer*, the official paper of the Administration of Thomas Jefferson, won an essay contest in 1797 on the need for a national system of education by denouncing what he perceived as the negligence of parents toward their children's intellectual and moral development.

"It is the duty of a nation to superintend and even coerce the education of children," the editor wrote. "[H]igh considerations of expediency not only justify but dictate the establishment of a system which shall place under a control, independent of and superior of parental authority, the education of children."

Mr. Glenn notes, however, that such a philosophy did not gain wide currency until after 1837, when the Massachusetts legislature created a state board of education and named Horace Mann, then president of the state Senate, to be its first secretary.

Mann used his position to warn of the dangers of an uneducated and unenlightened citizenry and to argue for uniform and universal public education.

He and his like-minded contemporaries, Mr. Glenn writes, "found in Prussia the model they were looking for: centralized state action to assure that all children received a centrally prescribed education in the interest of national unity and economic progress."

Critics of Mann's position, including Marcus Morton, elected Governor of Massachusetts in 1838, questioned the wisdom of allowing the state to assume too much influence over education.

"The more immediately [schools] are brought under the control of those for whose benefit they are established . . .," the Governor intoned in his inaugural address, "the more deep and active will be the feelings engendered in their favor, and the more certain and universal will be their beneficial agency."

Nevertheless, within a few decades, Mr. Glenn notes, the Prussian model of compulsory attendance, state-controlled training and appointment of teachers, and state prescription of curriculum, had taken root.

Consolidation of Control

Mr. Glenn and other modern historians contend that Mann and his contemporaries were motivated not so much by a benevolent interest in the welfare of children, as by the fear that the values and beliefs of immigrant and poor families would predominate if not assimilated and controlled.

For a long time after their ideas became popular, school governance remained decentralized, even in the nation's rapidly growing urban areas, allowing parents and communities to exert considerable control over their schools.

Ethnic, religious, and other organizations representing parents vied with business, political, and labor leaders over such controversial issues as the content of the curriculum, the amount and kind of religious instruction to be provided, and whether instruction would be offered in the languages of immigrants.

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, however, professional educators had managed, with the help of a new generation of reformers, to consolidate their control over the governance of the schools.

"Decentralized, ward-based, patronage-focused, lay-controlled school boards were gradually replaced by centralized, city-wide, professionally directed, reform-oriented boards," Paul E. Peterson writes in *The Politics of School Reform 1870-1940.*

David B. Tyack, in *The One Best System, A History of American Urban Education*, argues that educators of this era preferred a business model for education partly because they did not want to have to cater to the wishes of parents.

And outside of urban areas, a widespread belief that small school districts were inefficient fueled pressures for districts to consolidate.

"Population dynamics, combined with school-district consolidations, transformed locally controlled institutions into the bureaucratized systems we have today," says James Guthrie, professor of education at the University of California at Berkeley and director of Policy Analysis for California Education.

Between 1930 and 1972, he says, the enrollment of the average public-school district grew from 200 students to almost 3,000 students.

At the same time, he says, an average school-board member represented only 250 students 60 years ago; by 1972, each represented more than 2,000 students.

Community-Control Movement

The unresponsiveness of such large school bureaucracies came under attack in a number of cities during the 1960's, in what is now known as the "community-control movement."

The movement reflected rising dissatisfaction with the quality of education in some of the nation's largest urban districts, and was fueled by the frustration felt by many blacks toward the slow pace of integration in their schools.

In New York City, where the movement reached its peak, it was sparked by the board of education's inability to meet its promise to open P.S. 201, in East Harlem, as an integrated school.

Charging that both the school board and teachers' organizations were insensitive to the needs of the city's minority population, the minority community backed away from its demands for integration and developed a new rallying cry: "At least let us control the schools that are going to be in the ghetto," recalls David S. Seeley, a professor of education at the College of Staten Island, City University of New York, who served as education liaison to Mayor John Lindsay of New York.

black leaders against the school board and teachers' groups, the New York legislature approved a compromise plan that divided governance between a central board and 32 community districts.

"Most community-control forces viewed the legislation as a defeat," Mr. Seeley says. "They said it was a trick bag, not community control."

In recent years, some of the community districts have been plagued by problems of patronage and corruption, leading to calls for a fundamental overhaul of the decentralization law. A state task force created by the state legislature in 1988 is scheduled to release its recommendations for revamping the system within the next few months.

Some backers of the current system believe that it would work better if more parents were elected to the community boards, which in the past have typically been controlled by candidates backed by unions and local political parties.

"Parents are essential to effective school boards, because they have the most self-interest to want the schools to work well," says Judith Baum, who coordinated a drive that succeeded in getting more parents elected to the community boards in 1989.

While the current drive to empower parents has its roots in the community-control movement, Mr. Seeley says, that label is no longer being applied.

"What's happening is often the way that social movements work," he says. "First, there is a challenge to the existing power structure, but it successfully defends itself for the moment. Then, when things change enough, it begins to take hold."

The racial tensions that made the community-control movement seem a hostile and aggressive force have eased, he says, and educators are beginning to acknowledge that they cannot do the job alone.

And now, he says, "the failure of the schools is not just a cause for poor black parents; it's become a major pressing issue for business people, for governors, for a host of potential allies." ■

State Programs Spur Involvement in Decisionmaking

Continued from Page 13

trict that "parent involvement at the junior-high level usually goes down anyway," says Izona D. Warner, a parent-involvement consultant who has worked for the district for the past 11 years. "One way the system helps it go down is by not requiring those parents to review and sign the report cards."

"The system does listen" to such advice, she says.

Empowering Minority Parents

James P. Comer, the Maurice Falk Professor of Psychiatry at Yale University, argues that parent empowerment is particularly important in schools that serve low-income and minority communities.

Most of the teachers who work in these schools are unprepared by their own life experiences to understand the cultures and problems of the families they serve, he says. They tend to view the lack of parent involvement as an indication that the parents simply are not interested in education, rather than as a function of the social and economic pressures on families.

The parents, in turn, tend to view school as an inhospitable and unwelcoming place, he says. Some base their views on their own negative experiences in school, while others perceive schools as part of a larger power structure that is unresponsive to their needs.

Dr. Comer advocates including parents on school-based management teams as part of a comprehensive effort to build a partnership between schools and families.

In his model, a site-based management team is "a place where staff and parents interact with each other in ways where they come to appreciate each other as people with the same goals, and where the differences can be minimized and become unimportant," he says.

"Although all children benefit from positive social relationships," he says, "children from families under greater stress are least likely to develop fully and achieve at an adequate academic level without significant parent-school collaboration."

His model produced significant gains in student achievement in two New Haven, Conn., schools, and is now being used in more than 100 schools nationwide.

Last spring, the Rockefeller Foundation announced that it would spend several million dollars over the next several years to disseminate Dr. Comer's work even more widely.

'A Long-Term Process'

Few studies have attempted to examine the effects of allowing parents to participate in school governance, and the findings they offer are inconclusive and sometimes raise more questions than they answer.

Some studies of site-based management suggest that involvement in these activities diverts parents' and teachers' attention from a school's chief mission: teaching and learning.

But advocates of parent empowerment insist that the complexity of relationships between school governance and student achievement precludes identifying specific causal factors. For example, they say, researchers have also been unable to document any relationship between learning and whether a school board is appointed or elected.

"It shouldn't be expected that [parent empowerment] would show a direct and dramatic effect on student achievement," Ms. Epstein of Johns Hopkins says.

"It's a longer-term process," she says. "A decision a committee or a school board makes one year about the curriculum or a new discipline policy, if implemented appropriately, might have an impact on student achievement a year later."

In the short term, she adds, parent empowerment should show up as "more responsive behaviors on the part of the school, which in turn may impact kids' motivation."

Federal, State Programs Mandate Involvement

A majority of the current mechanisms for involving parents in school decisionmaking are in place as a result of school-district participation in several federal and state programs.

By far the largest program that involves parents in a formal advisory role was reaffirmed by the Congress in 1988 in its reauthorization of the federal Chapter 1 compensatory-education program. *(See story, next page.)*

Lawmakers strengthened a requirement that districts participating in the program establish parent advisory committees because, says Paul Weckstein, director of the Washington office of the Center for Law and Education, evaluations had found that "school districts did only what was mandated."

At least three states—California, Florida, and South Carolina—have also mandated the creation of advisory committees or citizens' councils, with parent membership, at most or all of their schools.

In each case, the councils have two purposes: to encourage educators to involve parents and other citizens in assessing a school's needs and programs, and to foster communications between schools and the communities they serve.

South Carolina's Law

South Carolina lawmakers first established school advisory councils in 1977 in an effort to promote local accountability. Lawmakers took steps to enhance the status of the panels and renamed them school "improvement" councils in the Education Improvement Act of 1984.

That reform law establishes several specific duties for the councils, including assisting the principal in the preparation and development of a required school-improvement report, monitoring the school-improvement process, and advising in the use of incentive awards created under the same act. It also states that the councils are to base their work on the tenets of "effective schools" research.

But such councils "only work as well as the principals see them as a useful entity at the school," says Jean N. Norman, director of the School Council Assistance Project, based at the University of South Carolina.

Ms. Norman and other project staff members estimate that only between 20 percent and 25 percent of the councils are effectively monitoring and implementing school-improvement plans, as required by the law.

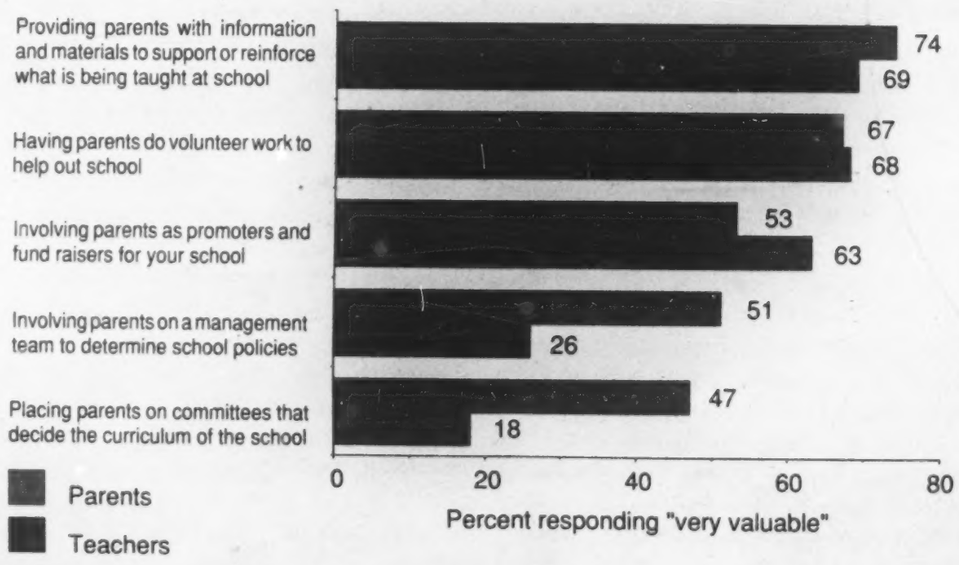
In a study released this spring, researchers found that schools where council members believed they had a high impact also had "significantly higher

Cleveland Education Summit

Surveys indicate that educators are far less receptive to the idea of parents as decisionmakers than they are to traditional forms of parent involvement that limit parents to support roles. Parents, on the other hand, generally favor gaining an increased voice in school affairs.

Parent Links With Schools

Here are some possible ways that parents might be involved with the school. For each, tell me how valuable you think it would be — very valuable, somewhat valuable, not too valuable, or not valuable at all.



Base: More than 2,000 parents and more than 1,000 teachers
Source: The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 1987

Parent Control of Public Schools

Do you feel that parents of public-school students should have more say, less say, or do they have about the right amount of say regarding the following areas in public schools?

	More Say %	Less Say %	Right Amount %	Don't Know %
Allocation of school funds	59	10	27	4
Curriculum (i.e., the courses offered)	53	9	36	2
Selection and hiring of administrators	46	14	37	3
Books and instructional materials	43	13	41	3
Selection and hiring of teachers	41	17	38	4
Teacher and administrator salaries	39	17	39	5
Books placed in the school libraries	38	15	44	3

Base: Nearly 1,600 adults ages 18 and older
Source: 21st Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, 1989

In your opinion, how much say do the parents of public-school students have about the following areas in the public schools in this community — a great deal, a fair amount, very little, or almost none?

	A Great Deal %	A Fair Amount %	Very Little %	Almost None %	Don't Know %
Books placed in the school libraries	5	17	29	37	12
Curriculum (i.e., the courses offered)	4	21	37	28	10
Books and instructional materials	3	14	31	41	11
Teacher and administrator salaries	3	12	25	50	10
Selection and hiring of administrators	3	11	26	50	10
Selection and hiring of teachers	2	8	29	52	9

Base: Nearly 1,600 adults ages 18 and older
Source: 22nd Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, 1990

expectations for student performance, more frequent monitoring of student performance, and better home-school relations than low-impact councils."

But the study also found that between 20 percent and 30 percent of teachers and principals do not support the roles and responsibilities given to the councils.

"You can't expect the councils to be effective in schools where the principal doesn't believe they ought to exist," Ms. Norman says. "They can still sandbag at the building level even if they are in compliance with the law."

Nevertheless, she believes the mandate has been helpful. Resistance to the councils has declined from earlier years, she says, when educators felt that "parents would come into schools and take over and so forth," or, like other state edicts, that "this too shall pass."

"I've also been a teacher who thought that if we just fixed the parents, the kids would be fine," she says, "but I've done a one-eighty. Parents have much to give about their own children, but teachers haven't been—and still aren't—trained to work with them."

The Chicago Experiment

Illinois lawmakers created a new model for parent involvement in 1988 when they adopted a reform law that gave Chicago's parents a controlling majority on local school councils and vested them with significant governance powers.

Community activists devised the essential elements of the Chicago plan to address what they considered to be the weaknesses of other efforts to mandate parent participation in decisionmaking.

They decided to give parents a majority on the councils, for instance, because the research on shared-governance schemes suggested that educators could easily undercut the influence of parents if they were in the minority.

"Educators have all of the advantages in the decisionmaking process: They understand how the school works, they use professional networks, and they have more time to devote to the process," Mr. Moore of Chicago's Designs for Change says.

"We felt that if parents had a majority on the councils, in practical terms, that would put them on about an equal par with educators," he says.

A side benefit to this, he says, is the fact that parents are often more aware than educators of community problems and resources.

One school council in Chicago has recently gone to court in an attempt to get an abandoned building that many students had to pass by on their way to school demolished, because it was a haven for drug dealers.

Another school with security problems persuaded four policemen who live in the neighborhood to serve as volunteer guards in their off-duty time.

"If these councils were composed of a majority of school staff," Mr. Moore says, "they wouldn't be thinking in these terms, by and large."

Chicago's reformers also decided that the councils needed to wield significant powers because similar bodies limited to purely advisory roles, including the local school-improvement councils that existed in the district at the time, had proven largely ineffectual.

"Another important piece of what we tried to do is delegate very clear powers to the councils," Mr. Moore says.

In most other districts, he says, "what's actually turned over to school-based councils is so unclear they end up really not controlling very much or doing very much."

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U.S. Programs Recognize Parent Contributions

By William Snider

The federal government has long recognized that parents should have a voice in educational decisionmaking.

Parents of children in federally funded special-education programs have the right, for example, to appeal their children's "individualized education plans."

And a growing number of federal education programs require that parents be actively involved as partners with education officials in designing and implementing programs at the local level.

That mandate is included in the largest precollegiate-education program, Chapter 1, which serves one in nine schoolchildren.

Such parent involvement is also required under the Indian- and bilingual-education laws, as well as in the Even Start and Family-School Partnership programs.

And the new Head Start Transition Projects program, included in the recently enacted Human Services Reauthorization Act, requires a strong role for parents in working with teachers to design educational programs for Head Start children moving into elementary schools.

But the Head Start program offers what many consider the strongest federal model for parent involvement in the governance of an education program.

Enacted as part of the "War on Poverty," the law establishing the early-childhood-education and social-services program for disadvantaged preschoolers requires that all local grantees establish a policy council of community representatives, the majority of whom must be parents.

The councils differ from parent advisory boards common to other programs in that they have the power to approve the hiring and firing of staff members and to review personnel and hiring policies. They also play an active role in program design and the development of grant applications and have the authority to approve budgets and grant applications.

Head Start policy councils historically have been seen "as a way for parents to learn to impact on institutions, deal with bureaucracies, and understand budgets and personnel," said Don Bolce, director of information-services for the National Head Start Association.

But they also ensure that the program "stays responsive to parents," he added.

Early Days of Chapter 1

The history of the Chapter 1 program reflects the ebb and flow in recent decades of the popularity of parent empowerment in education.

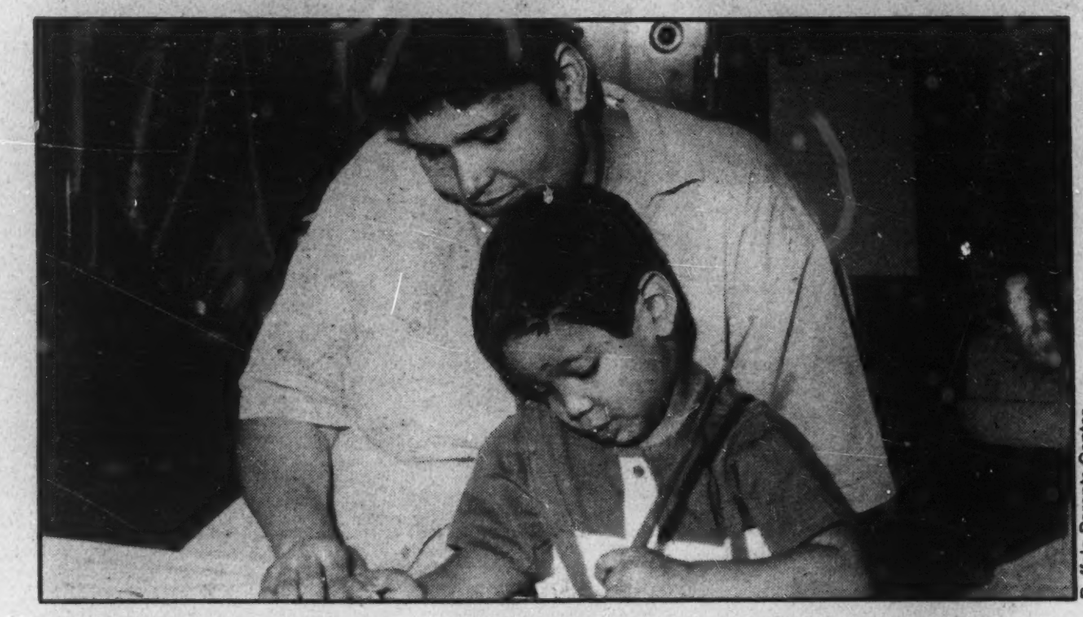
The program, then known as Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, was created in 1965 as another weapon in the War on Poverty.

Like other anti-poverty programs of the era, Title 1 was influenced by a belief that poor communities should be empowered to help devise the solutions to their problems.

U.S. Commissioner of Education Harold Howe 2nd recommended in 1968 that school districts create parent advisory councils to help plan, implement, and evaluate Title 1 programs. Three years later, each district receiving Title 1 funds was required to establish such a council.

By 1978, the Congress mandated parent advisory councils at both the school and district levels. The law dictated the councils' composition, and required that their members be elected by Chapter 1 parents.

The experience gained during those years "has played a major role in getting decisionmaking accepted as a means of involving parents in school activities," said Mary Jean LeTendre, director of compensatory education in the U.S. Education Department.



Buffalo Parents Center

Maria Del Moral and her son, Jonathan, visit a center for parents of children served by the federal Chapter 1 compensatory-education program in Buffalo, N.Y.

And it also proved that low-income parents were willing and able to play such roles, said Phyllis McClure, director of the division of policy and information for the Washington office of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

The advisory councils gave a new voice to the poor, she said, "who too often are frozen out, ignored, and treated in a paternalistic manner by many school officials."

Councils' Monitoring Role

The parent advisory committees played a strong role in monitoring Title 1 programs at the local level.

The programs "don't always work as well as they should, and there is no one else at the local level to draw attention to that fact," said Paul Weckstein, director of the Washington office of the Center for Law and Education, and a lobbyist for the National Coalition of Title 1/Chapter 1 Parents.

Parents were trained to read project applications and school budgets, "which often were prima facie evidence" that the districts were violating program regulations, Ms. McClure said. "They were critical early on in helping to clean up fiscal abuses," and ensuring that "the most in need were being served."

But in 1981, in the deregulation environment that accompanied President Reagan to Washington, Title 1 was reauthorized as Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, and the parent-involvement provisions were replaced with a one-line requirement that parents be consulted.

And most states followed suit; only five retained the requirement for parent advisory councils.

As a result, parent involvement in the program at the local level dropped precipitously, according to several studies, including the 1986 National Assessment of Chapter 1.

The findings of these studies, together with the growing body of evidence on the importance of the role parents play in the educational success of their children, led the Congress to reverse itself in 1988.

The Hawkins-Stafford School Improvement Act placed major emphasis on parent involvement in the program, and restored a formal advisory role for parents.

"By 1988, the research was so strong there was very little open opposition" to the parent-involvement provisions, said Robert Witherspoon, director of the National Coalition of Title 1/Chapter 1 Parents. The coalition was joined by groups such as the Children's Defense Fund and the National PTA in lobbying to get the provisions inserted into the bill.

"Even some of the state directors admitted they made a mistake in eliminating parent involvement when they saw parents being the best advocates for the program," he said.

Ms. McClure added, "It's so funny—the whole attitude toward parent involvement had totally changed by 1988."

"Nobody raised the specter of parents taking over," as many had in the earlier years of the program, she said.

'Worth the Cost'

The 1988 reauthorization does not require districts to re-establish parent advisory councils, instead allowing local educators flexibility in determining how to involve parents in the design and implementation of the program.

It does require school districts to develop written policies for involving parents in the program, and to hold annual meetings with parents.

Much of the new language in the law is designed to make parents partners in reaching the instructional goals of the program, providing funding to train parents and provide them with instructional materials to be used at home.

"The prominent focus of parent involvement [under Title 1] was monitoring," Ms. LeTendre said. "Now it is broader-based, with a heavy emphasis on parents being involved in the instructional components."

Early indications are that the new law has significantly boosted the level of parent participation in Chapter 1, Ms. LeTendre said.

The largest increases have occurred in the areas of parent-teacher conferences and home-based education activities, according to a soon-to-be-released federal report based on a survey of state Chapter 1 officials, she said.

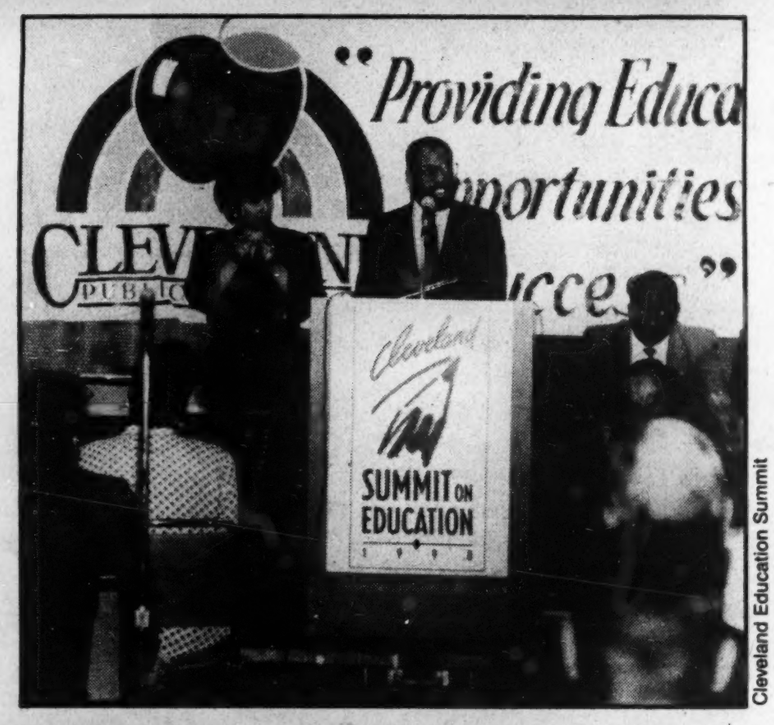
But some districts still put "parents way down the list in terms of their priorities for funding," Mr. Witherspoon said.

And, Mr. Weckstein noted, "People who are used to making decisions on their own naturally will resist involving someone else. But most administrators, if they step back and realize the legitimacy of parents and the advantages of involving them, will see it's worth the cost to them." ■

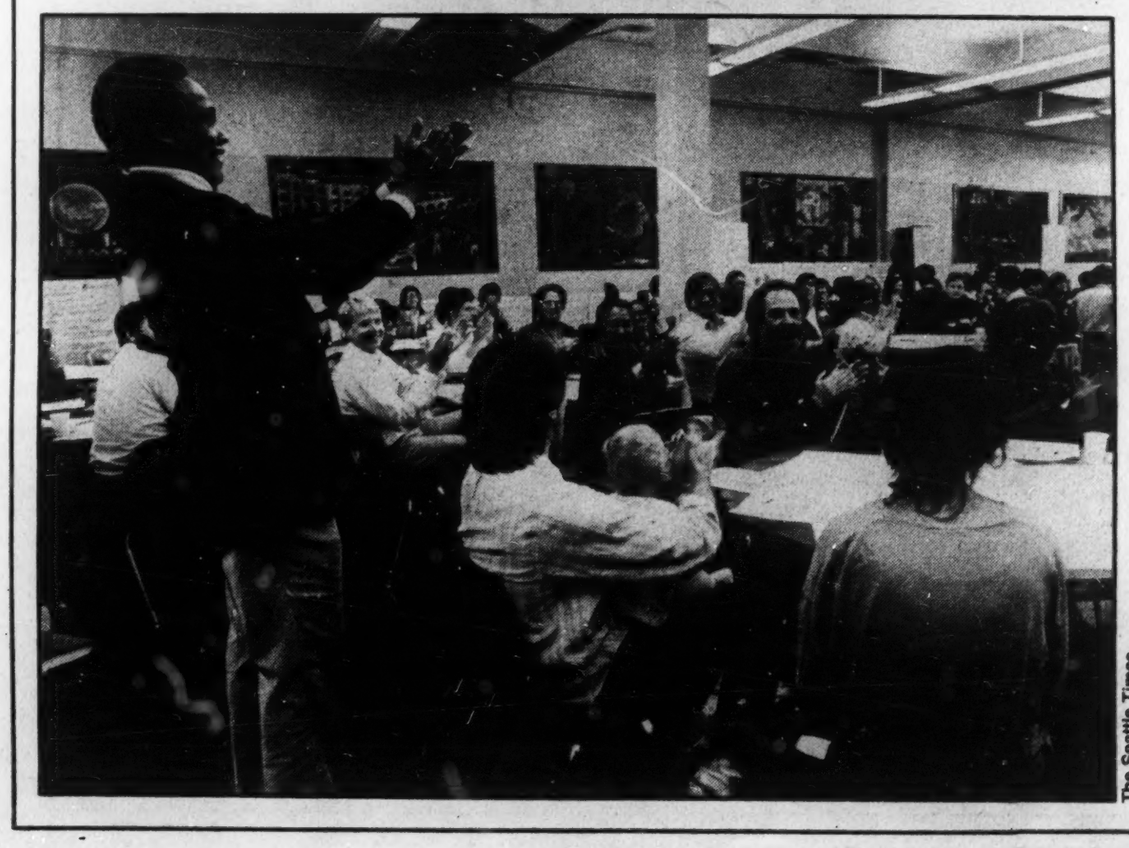
John Booz

The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel

Maria Avila, top left, and Maria Arevalo were elected to a local school council last year after the Illinois legislature adopted a law giving Chicago's parents a majority on such councils. At a Milwaukee forum, above, Gus Harris urges parents and teachers to work together to improve schools. In both Cleveland and Seattle, citywide "education summits" were convened earlier this year to solicit parent opinion.



Cleveland Education Summit



The Seattle Times

Reform Plans Affirm Parents' Role As 'Best Advocates' for Their Children

Continued from Page 17

Chicago's school councils are charged with developing three-year plans that detail goals for school improvement.

School principals, in consultation with a professional advisory council made up of school staff members, retain the authority to determine how the plans will be implemented.

But if the improvement targets are not met at the end of four years, the school councils have the authority to fire the principal.

The councils will also retain some control over implementation through their approval of how the school spends money budgeted in a lump sum from the central board.

"We're using something of the same school-board model used in rural and outlying areas," said Patrick J. Keleher Jr., former director of public policy for Chicago United, a coalition of business and community groups.

"It separates governance from management," he says, "and leaves the day-to-day operations in the hands of the professionals."

An 'Antithetical' Idea?

Nevertheless, many educators, and even some advocates of strong parent involvement, believe that the Chicago reforms have taken parent participation too far.

"The disturbing part of the Chicago model is that it is sort of antithetical to the idea that principals, teachers, and parents will work together as partners," Ms. Epstein says.

"If a principal has to spend all his time maintaining votes on a council, that's not necessarily the same as doing a good job educationally," Mr. Shanker says.

The president of the A.F.T. also warns that the control wielded by Chicago's parents could simply supplant the bureaucratic forces that discouraged innovation under the district's old structure.

To restructure schools successfully, teachers need a stable environment to take risks without fear that outside pressures will "force them to undo it," Mr. Shanker says. "That's what breeds a lot of cynicism on the part of educators."

Most observers and participants say that the Chicago plan is too new to judge whether it will prompt wholesale improvements in the district's schools. *(See story, page 14.)*

Districts Move To Give Increased Voice to Parents

While dissatisfaction with the public schools is simmering in many other districts, most of the gains made by parents in recent years have come without the level of confrontation that occurred in Chicago.

In Seattle, the school board decided to include parents in its new school-based management policy after 3,000 participants in a citywide "education summit" last spring decided such hands-on involvement should be one of the district's highest priorities.

The plan adopted by the board last summer requires schools that decide to use school-based management to establish committees with half their membership composed of parents, citizens, and students, and half drawn from the school's staff.

"If you believe that getting kids through school requires parents and schools to work in partnership, then 50-50 is a good number," says Amy Hagopian, a Seattle school-board member who sponsored a more radical version of the plan than was ultimately adopted.

"They are really going to have to be in a consensus mode to get anything accomplished," she adds. "Neither group is going to be able to force the other to do something if they don't want to."

Participation in the program is voluntary, and must be agreed to by all of the parties involved.

Schools participating in the plan will have broad leeway to set their budgets, develop curricula, choose instructional materials, and develop their own means of evaluating personnel.

The school board and the superintendent retain control over specific areas, including desegregation, food services, purchasing, payroll, the negotiation and enforcement of labor contracts, data processing, such mandated programs as special education and bilingual education, legal services, and the hiring, disciplining, and termination of all employees.

"Parents are the best advocates for their kids—that's their job," Ms. Hagopian says. "I think everybody else attached to the district is certainly trying to act on behalf of children, and many succeed well, but they also have other agendas, including their own personal career advancement."

"Look at the research—good schools have high levels of parent involvement, effective principals, a good climate, goals, clear expectations and a mission," she says. "Site councils are clearly a vehicle to help accomplish all of those."

Parents on School Committees

Almost all of the school-based management plans being tried in a growing number of districts include explicit parent representation, even though parents are seldom active partners in devising the plans.

The site-based-management plan adopted last year by the Los Angeles Unified School District, for example, grants parents significant representation on its local school councils.

The Los Angeles school board, apparently unwilling to grant teachers a majority on the councils, proposed including enough community members to ensure that teachers would constitute exactly half of the councils.

The United Teachers of Los Angeles countered with a proposal to include parents instead of community members.

Under a negotiated compromise, at least three of the five community-representative slots must be filled by parents with children in the school.

"Our sense is those are people who have a vested interest because they have their own children there," says Helen Bernstein, who has since been elected president of the local teachers' union.

In the meantime, the debate over what role parents should play in school-based management/shared decisionmaking has escalated in the district that pioneered the concept—Dade County, Fla.

Parents were not granted any formal role on the school-based cadres created under the district's 1986 collective-bargaining agreement, partly because officials did not want schools to have to follow any particular model, they say.

Some of the schools volunteering to participate in the program did include parents in their cadres, but others did not, prompting complaints from some parent-teacher associations and from citizens' advisory councils mandated under Florida law.

This year, district officials responded

to such complaints by informing schools wishing to participate in the program that they were expected to have at least one elected parent on their cadre.

"Having a parent in that kind of policy-making body has a leveling effect on the kinds of things that are discussed," says Frank Petruzielo, associate superintendent in charge of the bureau of professionalization, which directs many of the district's reform efforts. "It keeps the focus of those discussions very clearly on the student."

But some Dade parents are not satisfied with their representation on the cadres.

"Parents are sometimes included in a token way, but aren't really involved in the decisionmaking," says Anne Thompson, president of the Dade County Council of P.T.A./P.T.S.A.'s. Some schools, she says, even "scheduled meetings at times parents can't be there."

What Is 'Parity'?

An ad hoc committee on parent involvement set up by the Dade County Board of Education last year has fueled a controversy by recommending that parents be granted "parity" in the school system's governance at all levels, including on the school cadres.

The phrase "parity" was settled on after much hard bargaining, according to Ms. Thompson, because the parents on the committee did not want their recommendations to be "threatening" to the system. The intent is not to dictate that parents be granted as many seats on the school cadres as educators have, she says, but that parents should be "equally consulted."

In addition, she says, "if only one or two parents are involved, they can't necessarily represent all the points of view in the community, nor can they be on all of the subcommittees."

Ms. Thompson says she believes the recommendations have widespread support in the school system and will ultimately be implemented.

But there is also significant opposition to the idea that parents should be granted parity in school decisionmaking.

"Parents should have input in the cadres, but I don't think they should have decisionmaking power," says G. Holmes Braddock, a longtime member of the Dade County school board. "It puts too many players in the damn game."

"Their power comes from the elected process through the school board," he adds. "Where the public didn't have a say-so in the school board, if they're appointed instead of elected, that might be a different matter."

Mr. Petruzielo says the system is searching for "the right model and right balance for parent input into the public-education enterprise, somewhere between the good old punch-and-cookies days of the P.T.A. and giving them complete control."

Governance Role Spurs A Host of Questions

Once a state, district, or school elects to bring parents into the decisionmaking process, they must give considerable thought to how this should be accomplished, experts say.

"It has to be well thought out and well done, or it's not going to work," Ms. Lynch of the P.T.A. says.

The existing research provides little guidance on such major issues as what the school councils' membership should be to maximize the contributions of parents.

"We're pretty sure that parents need more than token representation—we've reached a point where that is not going to be defensible," Ms. Epstein says.

"What we don't know," she adds, "is whether it should be as it is in Chicago, where parents and community members have a majority, or if educators should have a majority, or if there is some productive balance between the two. That's one of the research questions for the 1990's."

Mr. Seeley of the College of Staten Island warns, however, that efforts to involve parents may become unproductive if they focus too heavily on the composition of the councils.

"We need a paradigm shift to a collaborative model," he says. "The counting of votes is still within the existing bureaucratic model."

"If educators and parents agree that they need to work together," he adds, "they will both end up with more de facto power than if they try to battle over who is going to have more votes."

More research is also needed on what decisions parents should be involved in, and which are better left entirely to educators, Ms. Epstein says.

"The research has to zero in on the actual effects of particular types of parent involvement so one could begin to pinpoint which types promote improvements," she says.

But local councils must be given more duties than simply allocating the few dollars in a school's supply budget, says James Guthrie, professor of education at the University of California at Berkeley.

Consensus on Selection

There is a clearer consensus emerging on how parents should be selected for local governing bodies: Almost all of the new school-based-management plans require that they be elected by their peers.

Experts agree that parents who are selected by a principal, or by virtue of holding office in a P.T.A. or other parent organization, often are not willing to challenge existing policies and practices as aggressively as parents who win their position in an election.

But school districts have found that even a fair election process may not draw representation from all sectors of a community.

The new Seattle policy calls for ensuring that school councils are representative of the minority populations that they serve.

The South Carolina law calls for the principal to select parents from underrepresented groups, but requires that elected members make up two-thirds of the councils.

Such plans must also grapple with the question of how the councils will make decisions after they are selected.

Some models call for all decisions to be made by consensus; others allow a simple majority vote to rule.

And there are endless variations in between: Chicago's school councils, for instance, can pass any business by majority vote of all council members, except for the selection of a principal, which requires support from 7 of the 10 members eligible to vote.

The Need for Training

Regardless of what structure is used, experts say, parents need as much, if not more, training as other participants in shared-governance schemes.

"One of the dangers is giving parents power with no training," says Ms. Epstein, who argues that parents should have both leadership training and access to other staff-development programs.

Educators, too, need training on "how to understand the different cultural backgrounds and perspectives that parents bring with them," she says.

Janet Crispeels, a coordinator with the San Diego County office of education who serves as a consultant on parent-involvement programs, says that training programs "need to focus fairly heavily on decisionmaking processes and consensus building."

"Schools can't engage in extensive restructuring if they don't train council members on group-process skills," she says.

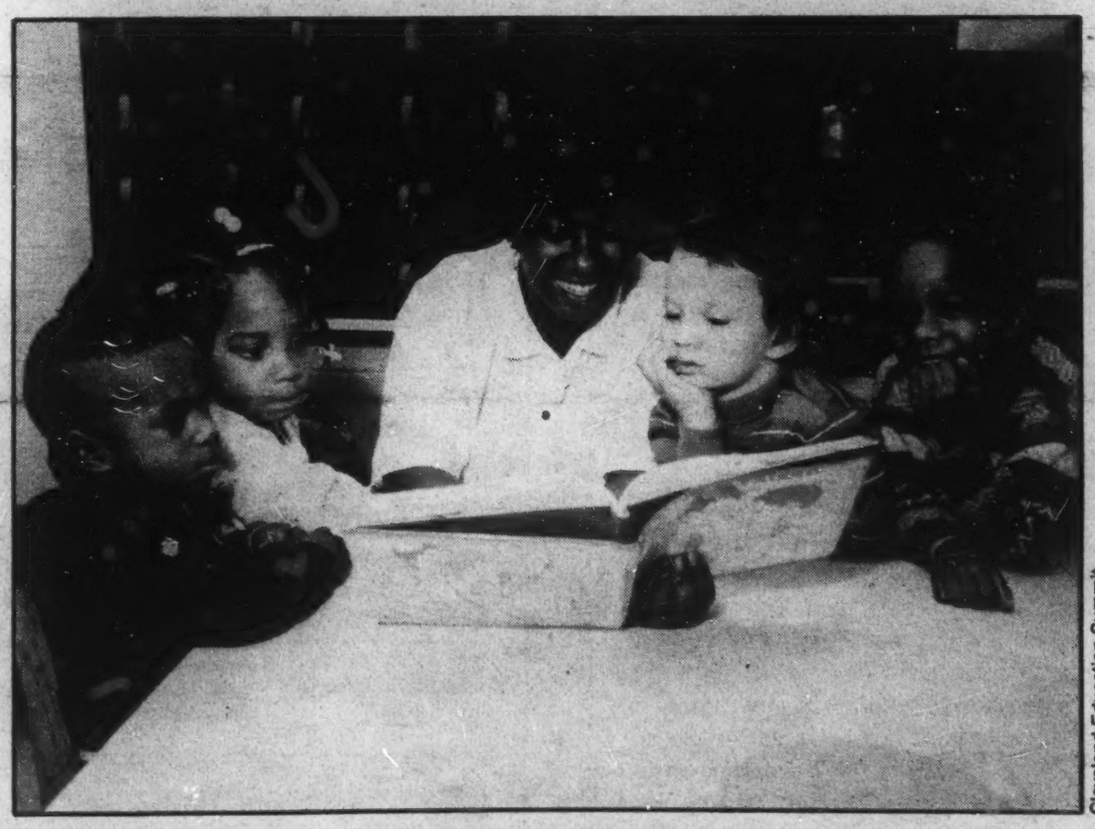
As for the more technical aspects of education, some experts say that parents will learn to grapple with the issues as they are exposed to them.

After 13 years of school councils in South Carolina, "we're still in a learning process," says Ms. Norman, director of the only training center that is funded by a state but remains independent of the department of education.

"I'm convinced that it's possible to make the fundamental debates quite clear and plain for the most ordinary parents to deal with, but it means abandoning some of our jargon," says Mr. Glenn, director of the state Office of Equal Educational Opportunity in Massachusetts.

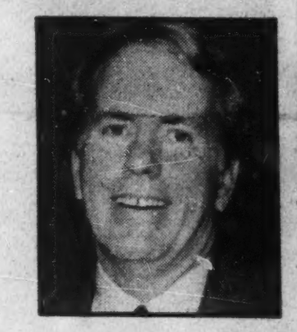
"I'm very encouraged by the debate over issues like retention and homogeneous grouping," he says. "They are as much philosophical issues as technical issues, and they are just the sorts of things

Continued on Page 20



Cleveland Education Summit

Although researchers, advocates, and others agree that becoming involved in school decisionmaking is one way for parents to interact with the schools, they disagree about how much emphasis should be placed on such an advocacy role.



I don't now how anybody in education can discount the importance that parents can have in making schools work.

—William P. Casey

Parents have much to give about their own children, but teachers haven't been . . . trained to work with them.

—Jean N. Norman

Having a parent on a policymaking body keeps the focus of those discussions very clearly on the student.

—Frank Petruzielo

If only one or two parents are involved, they can't necessarily represent all the points of view in the community.

—Anne Thompson

Continued from Page 19

that parents in a particular school ought to be wrestling with."

The school councils in District 15 in Brooklyn received some training, says Mr. Casey, the district's superintendent, but they also learned by doing.

"Some schools that are just starting out get involved in do-able projects, such as painting the lunchroom or revising the student code of discipline," he says.

"They need to do that just to feel that they can work together," he says. The councils with a longer track record "are making much more significant decisions about critical issues like curriculum and teaching."

The fact that parents enter the process at different times and at different levels of sophistication, he says, means that educators cannot conduct a training session "and think if you do it once, you don't have to do it again. It has to be ongoing."

Barriers to Change

Mr. Casey also notes that schools desiring to involve parents in decisionmaking must be willing to spend the time it takes to make such an effort successful.

"We found out quickly that it's enormously time-consuming," he says.

Concedes Margaret T. Rathfon, president of the districtwide citizens' advisory committee in Dade County, "Parents ask a lot of questions and demand a lot, and it adds to the burden of running schools."

"But if they really open the door," she says, "I believe most parents could really work with educators in coming up with better projects and better ideas."

Don Davies, executive director of the Institute for Responsive Education, notes, "The fragmented, highly restricted time schedule that schools are working on makes it very difficult to coordinate meetings with parents."

After-school meetings, Mr. Davies adds, are often complicated by contract provisions; the moonlighting jobs of teachers and principals; or the fact that many employees, and an increasing number of parents, live far from their schools.

The Chicago Board of Education had to negotiate a new agreement with its custodial union to reduce custodial fees that would have made it prohibitive for local school councils to meet in the evenings or on weekends.

Ms. Bernstein, president of the Los Angeles teachers' union, says: "We have an added problem in Los Angeles. Many parents don't speak English, so the proceedings are often translated into two or three languages at once."

"It takes forever to have a meeting," she adds.

A Word of Caution

Advocates of parent empowerment also caution that embracing such a philosophy will not automatically provide easy solutions to the tough problems facing schools.

"I think it's erroneous to think that parents are going to be the ones that makes schools change," Ms. Epstein says. "You can't predict who will be the catalyst in any given instance."

But including parents in the decision-making process could reduce opposition to needed innovations, advocates say.

"If parents were reassured and changes were explained to them, they would accept innovations," Ms. Henderson of the N.C.C.E. says.

"Too often, changes come from on high with a label saying, 'This is a new and better way,' " she says, adding that such an approach can trigger "intense feelings from a vocal minority."

"Districts with no policy for parent input into their decisions can really be blind-sided when some parents get angry," she adds. "If parents are already involved, districts have a much better defense against the angry ones."

Sometimes parents have creative ideas that educators would not have considered.

Robert S. Peterkin, superintendent of the Milwaukee public schools, for example, credits parents with several of the innovative ideas that have been incorporated into the district's newest magnet schools.

One, the newly revamped and renamed Ronald McNair School of Science and Technology, was originally conceived by parents who sold teachers, and then the district, on the idea, he says.

"They came up with the idea, we didn't," he says. "The teachers bought into it, so we gave them more money and hooked them up with [the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's] regional center."

An added benefit of involving parents in the development of the district's new magnet schools, he says, is that "we get a lot of buy-in."

"I don't think parents can be required to write a humanities curriculum," Mr. Peterkin says. "That's why you need a blend of curricular staff and building staff and parents. They can divide up the labor and move forward."

"If they're not scared to sit down and share, it's possible, it works," he adds. ■

William Snider is a former senior writer for Education Week. *This special series on parent involvement in education is being underwritten by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.*

'Choice' and 'Voice' Acknowledge Parents' Key Role in Education Process

By William Snider

Parents are gaining influence in the schools not only through the movement to give them a role in school decisionmaking, but also as a result of the ongoing drive to allow them to choose among schools.

Both strategies are predicated on the assumption that parents are key stakeholders in the education process as well as on the belief that they should be empowered to hold schools accountable.

Each also aims to encourage parents to become more involved in their children's education, and not to act simply as passive recipients of a government service.

And both are highly controversial ideas that have gained new currency during the debate over how to restructure the nation's education system.

Despite such similarities, however, experts differ considerably on the relative merits and importance of the two strategies in current efforts to improve schools.

David S. Seeley, a professor of education at the College of Staten Island, City University of New York, is one who believes that both strategies—which he calls "choice and voice"—are needed.

" 'Choice' gives parents options at the beginning of the process," he said, "but leaves teachers and administrators in absolute control of the schools."

" 'Voice' says that, since school boards are not going to have as much say over teachers," he continued, "parents at the school have to have some way of holding people accountable."

"That can happen in two ways," he added. "You can do it through a little representative democracy at the school level, like the Chicago model, and the other way you can do it is the collaborative model, in which the school, parents, and the community are all working for common objectives."

Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, believes, on the other hand, that parent empowerment in decisionmaking conflicts with the emerging movement to grant professional autonomy to teachers.

"I would be willing to give parents a right to choose schools in exchange for granting autonomy to professionals," he said.

Representing Children's Interests

James Guthrie, professor of education at the University of California at Berkeley and co-director of Policy Analysis for California Education, said both choice and parent empowerment represent responses to the fact that teaching has not yet become a profession that holds its own members accountable.

"Policymakers and parents are searching for ways to hold educators accountable," he said, "because no one in the system now represents the interests of children."

"In the absence of a market mechanism, and until we can assume that teachers will act on behalf of clients out of their own professional ethic," he said, "parents are needed to represent their children."

For Chester E. Finn Jr., professor of education and public policy at Vanderbilt University, choice and voice represent points on the continuum of parent involvement.

"Both methods differ from the legislative reform schemes I've seen so many states engage in," he said. "I think both are desirable, and they can be made to work together."

Choice is "the basic right of parents to remove their children from a horrible situation if they see a better one," he said. "To deny them that right is a public-policy sin that treats children as wards of the state."

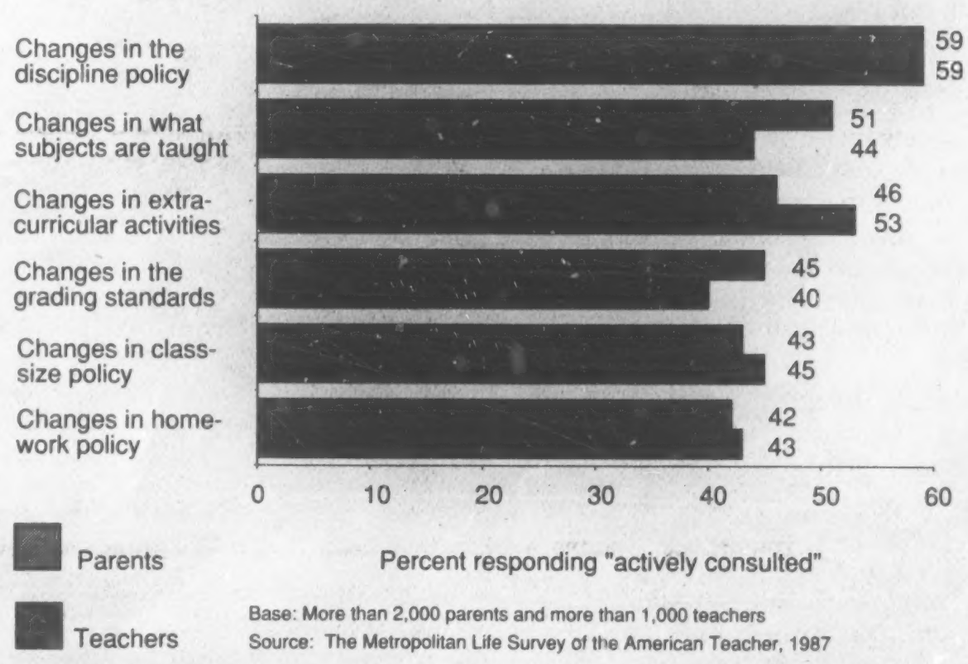
"Parent involvement in governance is not a God-given right," Mr. Finn added, "and some parents don't want to be involved in that way. It ought to be one of the dimensions that makes schools differ from each other—one of the legitimate grounds for choosing among schools." ■

Buffalo Parents Center

Andrea White works with two children in a Chapter 1 parents' center in Buffalo, N.Y. The federal program is among many that require parent involvement.

Consultation of Parents

When it comes to changes in discipline policy, what subjects are taught, extracurricular activities, grading standards, class-size policy, and homework policy, do you think that parents should be actively consulted, just kept informed, or not involved at all?



Base: More than 2,000 parents and more than 1,000 teachers
Source: The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 1987

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EDUCATION WEEK

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Chicago Reeling In Wake of Ruling Rejecting Reform

Some Worry Decision Could Impair Councils

By Lynn Olson

Many Chicagoans were still reeling last week from an Illinois Supreme Court decision that found the city's landmark school-reform law unconstitutional.

While public officials have portrayed the problem as a technical one that can be easily rectified, others caution that the ruling could leave aspects of the reform plan in limbo for months to come, impair the work of the local school councils empowered to drive educational improvements, and revive bitter debates about the legislation as a whole.

"It's going to create a lot of confusion and chaos," predicted William Ayers, professor of education at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The state high court's ruling cuts to the heart of Chicago's school-decentralization plan: the local school councils that were created at each of the city's 539 elementary, middle, and high schools to serve as a catalyst for educational change.

In a 6-to-1 decision handed down Nov. 30, the court said that the method used to elect members to the parent-dominated councils violates the one-person, one-vote principle

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L.A. Bilingual Aides Walk Out of Schools In Contract Dispute

By Peter Schmidt

Hundreds of teacher assistants in Los Angeles, most of them bilingual aides considered vital to communications with language-minority students in the city's classrooms, walked out of scores of schools last week after the district rejected contract demands by their recently established union.

Bilingual-education experts described the strike, which is being staged as a series of walkouts that began Nov. 28, as the first in the nation on behalf of bilingual teacher assistants.

Representatives of both the union and the school district said last week that the strike centers on differences related to work hours, job security, and health benefits.

The district says budget difficulties make it impossible to offer more concessions. The union argues that the district should make certain basic commitments to ensure the aides' job security and to elevate the status of their jobs.

As of late last week, union and district officials said, little progress had been made in resolving their differences.

Because all classes are still being held,

Continued on Page 10

Teaching our Teachers

Jason Lee

Few entities have endured as sustained a period of stress, analysis, and derision as the nation's schools of education, which have been under attack almost since their founding.

But in the past few years, pressure on teacher-preparation programs has mounted as the public schools themselves have been caught in the tumult of reform.

As U.S. Secretary of Education Lauro F. Cavazos noted last week, at a conference sponsored by his department to re-examine quality, flexibility, and accountability in teacher preparation, "Teacher education is currently in a state of great turmoil and uncertainty."

"We must restructure teacher education," he added, "as we restructure our school system."

Part 1 of a special series on teacher education, underwritten by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, begins on page 11.

A Frustrated Boston City Council Votes To Abolish School Committee

By Ann Bradley

Frustrated with the school committee's stalled search for a new superintendent, the Boston City Council last week approved a home-rule petition that would abolish the 13-member committee and place the schools under the control of the mayor.

Under the proposal, the district would have no school board, making it unique among the nation's more than 15,000 school districts, according to a spokesman for the National School Boards Association.

Mayor Raymond L. Flynn, who has long sought changes in the governance of the city schools, was expected to sign the unprecedented petition immediately. The proposed change in the city's charter, which would give the mayor the power to appoint a superintendent, would make the school department a "line item" in the city's budget like any other department.

The measure must now be submitted to the appropriate committees during Massachusetts' 1991 legislative session, which begins next month.

The council's vote represents the third time in two years that city leaders have attempted to change the governance of the public-school system. A nonbinding referendum asking voters their opinion of creating an appointed school committee was narrowly approved in November 1989, but was not pursued because it failed in predominantly minority neighborhoods.

In September, the city council hastily crafted a proposal for a hybrid elected-appointed board in an attempt to get the measure on the November ballot, but it died in

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Rapid Turnover in Urban Superintendencies Prompts Calls for Reforms in Governance

By Ann Bradley

The extraordinary number of urban school districts that are in the market for new superintendents—a number that has increased dramatically in the past few weeks—is prompting calls by some superintendents and scholars for a fundamental rethinking of the governance of city schools.

While the tasks facing urban superintendents have never been simple ones, the increasing demands placed on school systems in the nation's largest cities have made such superintendencies virtually impossible jobs, many top school officials said last week.

"I think that the whole governance structure of the schools is going to have to be looked at," said Ramon C. Cortines, the superintendent of the San Francisco schools. "I am very concerned about what's happening around the nation. What we are seeing across America is the disregard and the discarding of human beings."

School boards in Austin, Tex.; Boston; Columbus, Ohio; Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C.; Charleston, S.C.; Detroit; Indianapolis; Hartford; Houston; Kansas City, Mo.; Memphis; Milwaukee; Savannah, Ga.; St. Louis; Toledo, Ohio; Tucson; Virginia Beach, Va.; and Washington are all in various stages of searches for new chief executive officers for their school systems.

Last month alone, the superintendents of Columbus, Houston, Milwaukee, and Toledo resigned, while the school boards in

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Award Heralds Recognition of the Role of Teachers as Researchers

By Robert Rothman

In a move that some educators say heralds a growing recognition of the role of teachers in education research, the National Council of Teachers of English has for the first time awarded its highest research prize to a classroom teacher.

Nancie Atwell, a former 8th-grade teacher in Maine, last month won the 1990 David H. Russell Award for Distinguished Research in the Teaching of English for her book, *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning With Adolescents*.

N.C.T.E. officials insist that the award was based on the merits of her book, and was not a "political" move to honor teachers. But several observers—and Ms. Atwell herself—say the prize conveys a message that teachers can have a role as researchers.

In her acceptance speech, Ms. Atwell described her award as representing an acknowledgment that the "observations and reflections of classroom teachers count as research."

"When the knowledge that informs our profession comes from many quarters," she said, "when research is seen as an inclusive, rather than an exclusive process, everyone benefits, but children benefit especially."

With the increased interest in teacher professionalism, along with reforms in school structure and assessment, educators note, a growing number of teachers are undertaking critical analyses of classroom practices. In many cases, those teachers are also writing and reporting on their findings.

Such efforts, teachers say, have given them

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Also in the news

28 **My New Kentucky Home**
The state's new school chief, Thomas C. Boysen, made his maiden trip to the Bluegrass State last week.

Lonnie Harp

Publication Schedule

With this issue, *Education Week* begins a three-week publishing break. The next issue will be dated Jan. 9.

The deadline for both display and Marketplace advertising for the Jan. 9 issue is Friday, Dec. 28.

IN SUMMARY

Test Grant
The MacArthur Foundation has awarded $1.3 million to help develop national examinations that could be used as the basis for high-school diplomas, college admissions, and employment decisions. **Page 5.**

Gotham Condom Plan
New York Schools Chancellor Joseph A. Fernandez last week proposed that condoms be distributed on request—and without requiring parental consent—to high-school students. **Page 5.**

Children's-TV Changes
While vowing to reassert their dominance of children's television, public-broadcasting executives have dropped funding of several series popular among children and educators. **Page 6.**

Preparing Principals
A national panel last week called for major changes in principal-preparation programs, which it said are based more on theory than on the knowledge and skills of real-life school leaders. **Page 9.**

Reaching Out for Choice
Secretary of Education Lauro F. Cavazos last week reaffirmed school choice as the cornerstone of Bush Administration education policy by creating a choice "outreach office." **Page 30.**

Magnet-School Rules
Responding to complaints that its desegregation standards were unrealistic, the Education Department has allowed more flexibility in rules for the magnet-school program. **Page 31.**

Research Competition
The Education Department last week completed its education research-and-development competition by announcing grants for regional laboratories and research centers. **Page 32.**

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ACROSS THE NATION

NATIONAL

School Meals Should Limit Fat, Salt Content, Advocacy Group Urges

Over the next two to four years, school lunches should have no more than 35 percent of their calories coming from fat and should contain less than 1,000 milligrams of sodium per meal, a new report urges.

The report, which was sponsored by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a Washington-based advocacy group, said that by 2000, the fat content of school lunches should be limited to 30 percent. By that date school meals should also contain no more than 800 milligrams of sodium, the report said.

School lunches should also contain more fresh fruits and vegetables, and school officials should not permit the sale of soft drinks and "junk food" during school hours, according to the center.

The report won the endorsement of the American School Food Service Association, marking the first time the association has endorsed a proposal that includes numerical limits on the amount of fat and salt in school meals.

■ **More than half of U.S. teenagers performed volunteer work last year, and nearly half contributed money to charities,** a new poll has found.

The national survey of 301 teenagers ages 14 to 17 was conducted by the Gallup Organization for the Independent Sector, a nonprofit coalition of organizations interested in philanthropy.

The survey found that teenagers who did volunteer work averaged 3.9 hours of service a week, and the average total contribution of teenagers to charitable causes last year was $48.

■ **Modest gains in student achievement among students in large urban districts indicate that urban schools are making progress in meeting new national education goals,** a report by the Council of the Great City Schools concludes.

The report, "Results 2000: Progress in Meeting Urban Education Goals," presents the results of a year-long study of how well urban districts are meeting six goals modeled after those adopted by President Bush and the nation's governors last year.

In particular, the report notes, "there is a clear, general trend of rising scores in large-city districts over the past five years."

Of the 45 districts surveyed, 31 reported improved math and reading scores at the elementary level, and 22 cited gains at the secondary level. Thirteen districts reported stable scores or mixed results in the elementary grades, and 22 in the secondary grades.

The report also cites renewed efforts to provide educational opportunities for preschoolers, increase graduation rates, increase the number of students going on to college, hire culturally and racially sensitive staff members, and reduce substance abuse as indicators of progress toward the goals.

Copies of the report are available for $15 each from the Publications Department, Council of the Great City Schools, 1413 K St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

STATES

Student Paper's Critical Comments Not Libelous, Calif. Court Holds

A high-school newspaper article that quoted a student's characterization of a teacher as the worst in the school was not libelous, a California appeals court has ruled.

In a unanimous decision, the three-member California Court of Appeal for the First Appellate District in San Francisco last month upheld a lower court's ruling that the student's statements were meant as opinion, not fact.

Larry L. Moyer, a teacher at Foothill High School in Pleasanton, filed a $1-million lawsuit against the school district, the school's principal and newspaper adviser, and the students who made and reported the comments in March 1988 articles in the school newspaper *In Flight*.

The original article, and a follow-up story, quoted a student calling Mr. Moyer a "babbler" and "the worst teacher at F.H.S."

In its decision, the appeals court said the "worst teacher" statement "was simply an expression of anger or disgust on the student-speaker's part."

Similarly, the court found the "babbler" statement "a form of exaggerated expression conveying the student-speaker's disapproval of [Mr. Moyer's] teaching or speaking style."

Robert Links, a lawyer for one of the student journalists, hailed the ruling.

"In essence they're saying that even a little newspaper like *In Flight* can be as important as *The New York Times*," he said.

Mr. Moyer has not yet decided whether to appeal the ruling, his lawyer, Rita Rowland, said last week.

"We were very disappointed," she said, adding that it was a "sad decision for teachers."

Sinking Their Teeth Into Science

Last week, students caught chewing gum during class in one Central Florida school district didn't find themselves in deep trouble for a change.

Not only were they allowed to chew gum, they were on a "supervised chewing regimen" to do so.

In fact, for the next three years, students at 13 schools in the Polk County district will be enjoying their gum and helping their schools earn money in the process.

Loel Barr

Under an agreement with the University of Florida's department of dentistry, some 4,000 7- to 12-year-olds in the district will be chewing sugarless gum as part of a research study.

Anthony J. Conti and his co-workers from the university want to examine the relative benefits of gum sweetened with two kinds of sweeteners—sorbitol and xylitol. Previous research has indicated that chewing sugarless gum may help reduce cavities in children by inhibiting the growth of bacteria and reducing acidity in the mouth after meals.

The 13 schools volunteered for the program after hearing a presentation by Dr. Conti. The participating students had to get permission from their parents.

For 10 minutes twice a day, the students will be supervised as they chew the gum—some one kind, some the other. They'll also receive free toothbrushes and annual checkups courtesy of the university.

And the university really sweetened the deal for the district, which will receive a total of $325,000 over the period. Some of the money will go to the participating schools and some to the district's scholarship fund, a school spokesman said. —G.B.

DISTRICTS

Federal Appeals Court Upholds Superintendent's Free-Speech Right

A school superintendent's right to free speech outweighs any loyalty to the school board that employs him, a federal appeals court ruled last month.

In a 2-to-1 decision, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit held that the Salado, Tex., school board violated former Superintendent Nolan Kinsey's free-speech rights when it fired him after he openly supported the board's incumbent president and two other candidates in a 1988 election. All three candidates lost, and their replacements voted to fire Mr. Kinsey.

A lower court had ruled in favor of the board, but the appeals court disagreed, saying that "to unequivocally forbid such a person from participating in the election of school-board members deprives that person of his right to freedom of speech and denies the electorate access to his unique point of view."

In a dissenting opinion, Judge Thomas Gee wrote that the court has "sent a message that self-conferred tenure waits only upon involving oneself in the political campaigns of one's elected superiors."

The district has asked for a rehearing.

■ **The Boyd County, Ky., school district operates with little coherent organization and improperly identified an entire 1st-grade class as remedial so that the teacher could be paid with state funds,** a

team of auditors concluded in a report delivered to the state school board last month.

The audit was among the latest of a series of investigations critical of the county's schools. In September, the state ordered district officials to revise their special-education programs to ensure proper evaluations, and the district's superintendent faces charges of official misconduct for allegedly lying to the state about overcrowded classrooms.

The latest report also said the district fails to provide a free education because it depends on aggressive year-round fund-raising efforts, including soft-drink and candy sales, for its financial survival, despite the fact that the district receives more in state aid per student than many more affluent districts.

Delmis Donta, the district's superintendent, has asserted that audit contains "misinformation and conclusions which are totally or partially erroneous."

■ **Every principal in the Philadelphia public schools will receive a free Apple computer and training** under a new program run jointly with the computer manufacturer and Drexel University.

Under the program, called Project Launch PAD (for Philadelphia, Apple, and Drexel), Apple Computer Inc., will donate 280 Macintosh Plus computers with hard-disk drives of 40 or 80 megabytes to the district. The firm also is sending five Macintosh portable computers and five portable modems. The total value of the hardware is nearly $900,000, according to Barbara Farley, a school spokesman.

For its part, the university will assist in developing the software, including templates of standard district forms for data entry and tracking. University staff members will also develop and offer a hands-on training program at Drexel for the principals receiving the computers. Training will be offered for novice, intermediate, and experienced computer users.

Although some principals, particularly those at larger schools, already have computers, Ms. Farley said, most do not. Principals usually are given the lowest priority in getting new computer equipment, she said.

■ **Next summer, some high-school students in Fulton County, Ga., will be stepping out from behind their desks and taking their place at the teacher's podium.**

Under a new program approved last month by the Georgia Board of Education, students may now enroll in an education course that culminates in actual teaching experience at nearby elementary schools or their own high school.

The program is similar to another one, whose funding was cut off a decade ago by state legislators who said students should be learning from teachers, not doing their jobs.

Shirley Phillips, an assistant superintendent who is administering the "Young Educators of Tomorrow" program, said the state's change of heart came from the realization that Georgia will need some 35,000 new teachers between 1990 and 1995.

The program focuses on personal issues such as learning styles in grades 6 through 8, discusses issues facing schools and education in the 9th and 10th grades, and shifts to the teaching component with juniors and seniors, who will teach alongside a mentor teacher, Ms. Phillips said. More than 200 students have already signed up, she added.

■ **Computerized selection is replacing school officials' first-round scrutiny in pairing city children with suburban schools for interdistrict transfers in the Milwaukee area,** school officials have announced.

The 24-district Compact for Educational Opportunity, an effort to promote racial integration in Milwaukee-area schools, involves some 7,000 elementary and secondary students, including some who transfer to city schools from suburban districts, according to Russell Prust, the compact's manager for support services.

Last recently, officials in a participating district chose from piles of applications from students seeking to attend their schools.

But a computer-based system now will send a participating district enough applications for its available slots. Should the district reject an applicant, another application will be provided, until all slots are filled, Mr. Prust said.

Schools may still reject a potential transfer student for various reasons, including the student's previous expulsion for possessing a weapon or for another serious infraction; failure to provide application information as requested; need for bilingual education not available in a given district; and record of an inordinate number of unexcused absences.

The computerized system is designed to ensure that the racial composition of the transfer students in a given district reflects the racial composition of the Milwaukee schools' minority students: approximately 80 percent black, 12 percent Hispanic, 5 percent Asian, and 3 percent Native American.

■ **The Independence, Mo., school board has offered to accept transfer students from the Kansas City public schools beginning next fall in an effort to free the district from a school-desegregation lawsuit** that has embroiled the area for more than a decade.

Late last month, Independence school officials offered to accept about 35 minority junior-high students from the neighboring district. The plan also calls for a new, $4.4-million elementary school, to be built by Kansas City using state funds, to serve some 450 to 500 students from both districts.

Last week, the Kansas City board agreed to discuss the plan in committee and review the legal implications, said Reginald E. Rowe, a district spokesman.

Before the plan can become final it must be endorsed by the Kansas City district and the local teachers' union, the state, and the lawyer for the plaintiffs in the desegregation case, Mr. Rowe added.

■ **A Maine school district's proposal to decrease a $213,000 budget deficit by adopting a four-day school week has been rejected by the state commissioner of education.**

While the proposal would have eliminated 22 school days, extra hours would have been added to compensate for the loss, said Richard Clockedile, superintendent of School Administrative District Number 3.

Mr. Clockedile cited unexpected rises in fuel costs, along with several other factors, as reasons for the budget shortfall.

Richard H. Card, deputy state commissioner of education, called the deficit-reduction proposal "thoughtful and thorough," but described the four-day week as unnecessary. "Our rule of thumb is to use all other available options before waiver of state regulation is required," Mr. Card said.

DIMENSIONS

Public-School Enrollments

Public-school enrollments for the 1990-91 school year increased by more than 400,000 students over the previous year and passed the 41-million mark for the first time since the early 1980's, according to a survey conducted by a private marketing firm.

The firm, Market Data Retrieval, an eduational marketing-research and mailing-list firm affiliated with the Dun & Bradstreet Corporation, conducts an annual telephone survey of all 15,000 school districts in the United States.

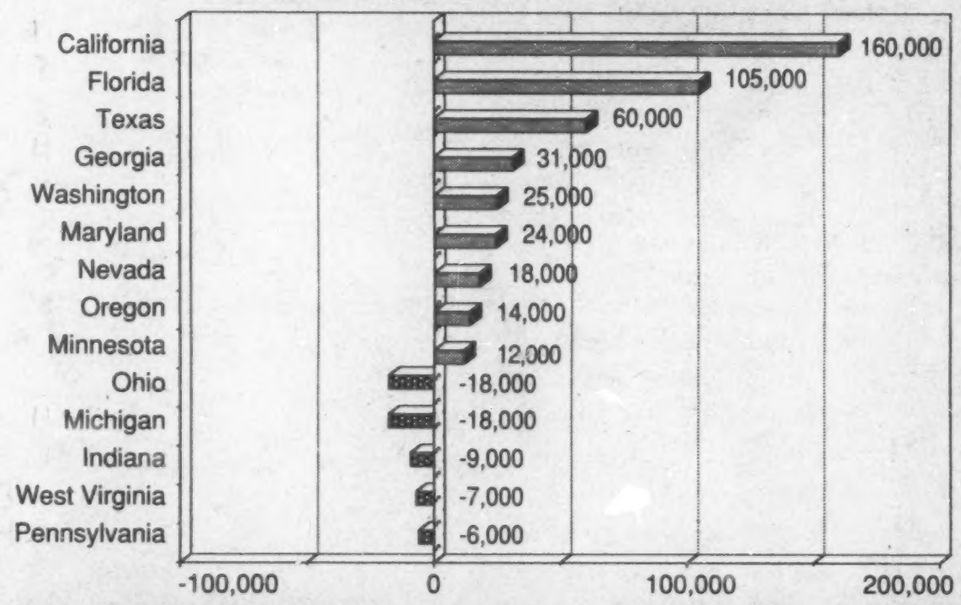
This year's survey showed the biggest gain was in California, which enrolled approximately 160,000 more students than last year. Four California counties—Los Angeles, San Bernadino, Riverside, and San Diego—posted the largest gains by county in the nation, the survey said.

Over all, elementary enrollments increased by 450,000 to 22,450,000 and middle schools grew by 208,000 to 7,172,000, the report said. High schools, meanwhile, dropped by 250,000 to 11,638,000; the firm expects high-school enrollment to rebound by 100,000 next year.

Five states—Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania—had large enrollment losses.

More information on the survey is available from Market Data Retrieval, 16 Progress Drive, Shelton, Conn. 06484; telephone (203) 926-4800.

Changing Public-School Enrollment



Source: Market Data Retrieval 1990 Survey.

PEOPLE

■ **Pete Rose,** a former manager and star of the Cincinnati Reds, will soon be going to bat for the city's school system.

Mr. Rose, now serving a five-month sentence for tax evasion at the federal prison camp in Marion, Ill., will serve out part of his 1,000 hours of court-ordered community service as an instructor assistant for the physical-education department, according to a district spokesman.

The slugger is expected to divide his time among five inner-city schools teaching P.E. and health classes, the spokesman said, but final details have not yet been worked out.

When school closes for the summer, he is expected to continue his community service at the city's youth centers.

Mr. Rose's sentence is due to end Jan. 7.

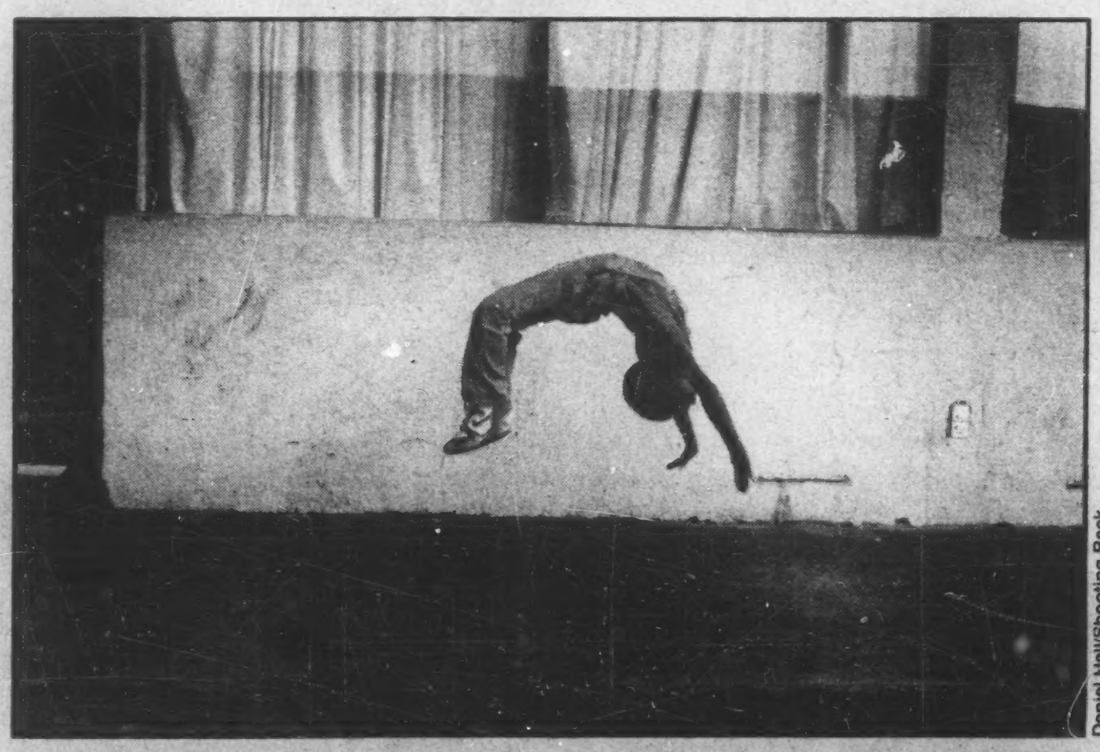
■ Three distinguished educators have won the 1990 Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Education.

The winners are **James P. Comer,** associate dean of the Yale University School of Medicine and Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry at Yale's Child Study Center; **Clark Kerr,** president emeritus of the University of California; and **Richard C. Wallace Jr.,** superintendent of the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Each received a cash award of $25,000 for his contributions to the field.

The annual prize was established in 1988 in celebration of the publisher McGraw-Hill's 100th anniversary. It is named for the corporation's chairman emeritus, who is the founder and president of the Business Council for Effective Literacy.

Head Over Heels



Daniel Hall/Shooting Back

Daniel Hall, 11, took the above picture for Shooting Back, a nonprofit group that sponsors photography and writing workshops for homeless and at-risk children in the Washington area. The group recently staged an exhibition of its work.